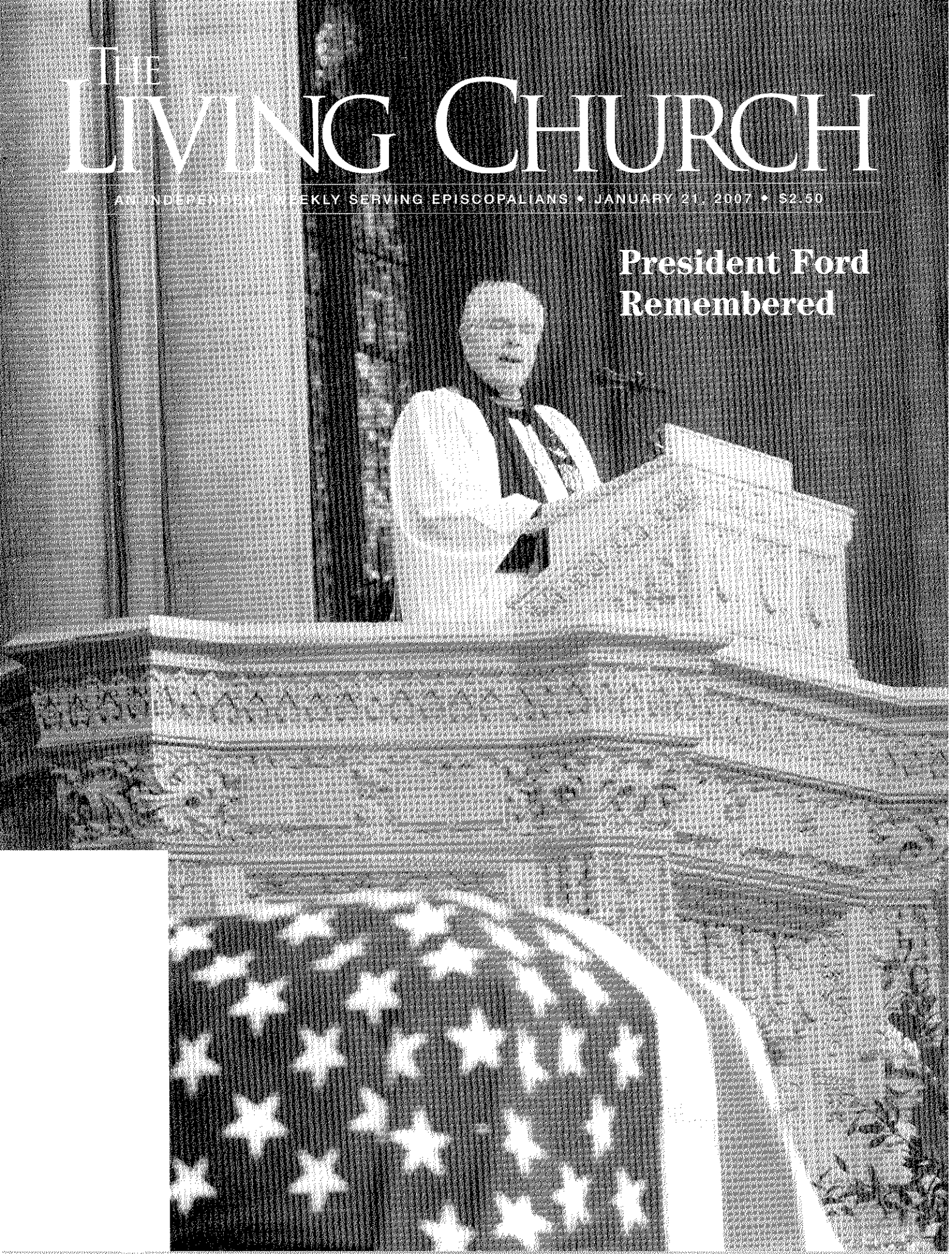


THE LIVING CHURCH

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President Ford Remembered



Church Services Honor Former President Ford

Two Episcopal parishes and Washington National Cathedral figured prominently in the funeral events for former President Gerald R. Ford, who died Dec. 26 at age 93.

On Dec. 29, President Ford's casket was transferred to St. Margaret's, Palm Desert, Calif. The 38th president and his widow, Betty, joined the congregation in 1977. There, a public viewing followed a private prayer service for the family and visitation for invited friends. After lying in repose overnight in the church, the casket was taken from the church to Palm Springs International Airport.

The Rev. Robert Certain, rector of St. Margaret's, accompanied the casket and President Ford's family to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. Fr. Certain said he last visited with the former president on Dec. 16 when he went to the Fords' home to give him communion.

For three days the casket lay in state in the Capitol rotunda, then was taken to Washington National Cathedral for a Jan. 2 funeral. Fr. Certain offered the prayers of commendation and preached the homily, during which he recalled that President Ford spoke with him about his concern for the church before Fr. Certain attended last summer's General Convention.

"He asked me if we would face schism," Fr. Certain said. "After we discussed the various issues we would



An honor guard and pallbearers accompany the casket of former President Gerald Ford at the start of the Jan. 2 state funeral held at Washington National Cathedral. (Donovan Marks photo)

consider, particularly concerns about human sexuality and the leadership of women, he said he did not think they should be divisive for anyone who lived by the great commandments to love God and neighbor. He then asked me to work for reconciliation within the church.

"Gerald Ford was a Christian man, a man who lived his life in accordance with the virtues of the Beatitudes," he continued. "For us, he will continue to serve as an example of how to live as a

man of faith, a man of the nation, a man for the world."

Following the service, the casket was flown to Grand Rapids, Mich., where a service and public viewing was held at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. A Jan. 3 funeral service was to be held at Grace Church, East Grand Rapids, where the Fords were longtime parish members and were married in 1948 at the church's previous location. The Rev. Charles Howell, Grace's rector until earlier this year, was to officiate along with the interim rector, the Rev. Nixon McMillan, Deacon Kathy Brower and Fr. Certain.

In praising President Ford, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori noted that "his leadership in assisting with the completion of Washington National Cathedral and supporting the work of Episcopal Relief and Development will be long remembered."

Speaking on CBS television's *The Early Show*, Fr. Certain noted that "the theme of the president coming home goes throughout this whole week. Coming home to Washington, where he served his country so well, coming home to Michigan. Coming to his heavenly home."